

KEEPY, ^{year ??} Quinky & crazy ^{this whale was By Howard S. CAMA'S HOME.}

... Tales from the Clark side

A sorry tale of a lost baby whale

Oswald the Whale came for a visit in October 1931. He never left.

At first, people thought he was a sea serpent stuck in the Columbia River slough. It turned out, the "monster" was just a playful, 15-foot-long baby killer whale. The Columbian reported thousands of people flocking to the banks of the slough daily until Ed Lessard, an ex-whaler who lived in Clark County, figured he could make a buck off the aquatic mammal. He and his brother acquired a fishing license and harpooned Ossie.

"Lessard looked at the thousands who came and went on the river banks and thought of them in terms of admission, so much per head," the paper reported. "Lessard will raise Oswald and put him on exhibition, minus the acrobatics, of course, for a dead whale has to be very still."

The brothers were taken to court over the action and convicted of violating fishing laws, but they appealed on the grounds that Ossie wasn't a fish — and won.

They toured the country with Ossie's body in a large metal tank, but when profits dried up, they took him to their property on Livingstone Mountain and dumped him off. The farm eventually was sold to a man in China, and Ossie was forgotten.

Over time, the location of the burial tank became a lost Dutchman's mine of sorts.

Eventually, someone ran across it. News of its whereabouts spread. The box was demolished, and Ossie's body was desecrated by vandals. His teeth were knocked out. His body was broken up.